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LITERARY BACKGROUNDS OF PRESENT DAY  
GERMANY

A. E. ZUCKER AND W. P. FRIEDERICH



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CHAPEL HILL

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LITERARY BACKGROUNDS  
OF PRESENT DAY GERMANY

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and

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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LITERARY BACKGROUNDS OF PRESENT DAY GERMANY.....	4
I. GOTTHOLD EPHRAIM LESSING, 1729-1781: <i>Nathan the Wise</i> .....	5
II. JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE, 1749-1832: <i>Hermann and Dorothea</i> .....	7
III. JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE: <i>Faust</i> .....	10
IV. FRIEDRICH SCHILLER, 1759-1805: <i>William Tell</i> .....	13
V. JOHANN LUDWIG TIECK, 1773-1853: <i>Puss in Boots</i> .....	15
VI. HEINRICH VON KLEIST, 1777-1811: <i>The Prince of Homburg</i> .....	18
VII. <i>Fiction and Fantasy in German Romance</i> , Edited by PIERCE and SCHREIBER.....	21
VIII. RICHARD WAGNER, 1813-1883: <i>Lohengrin</i> .....	23
IX. GOTTFRIED KELLER, 1819-1890: <i>The People of Seldwyla and Seven Legends</i> .....	25
X. FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, 1844-1900: <i>Thus Spake Zarathustra</i> .....	28
XI. GERHART HAUPTMANN, 1862- : <i>The Weavers</i> .....	31
XII. THOMAS MANN, 1875- : <i>Buddenbrooks</i> .....	33
XIII. CARL ZUCKMAYER, 1896- : <i>The Captain of Köpenick</i> .....	35
XIV. ARNOLD ZWEIG, 1887- : <i>The Case of Sergeant Grischa</i> .....	37
XV. JAKOB WASSERMANN, 1873-1934: <i>The World's Illusion</i> .....	39
XVI. HANS FALLADA, 1893- : <i>Little Man, What Now?</i> .....	42
XVII. HERMANN LOENS, 1866-1914: <i>The Harm Wolf</i> .....	44
XVIII. E. ALEXANDER POWELL, 1879- : <i>The Long Roll on the Rhine</i> .....	47
XIX. JETHRO BITHELL: <i>Germany: a Companion to German Studies</i> .....	50
SPECIAL REFERENCE BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	52
ADDRESSES OF PUBLISHERS.....	53
SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS.....	54

## INTRODUCTION

This selection of German writings in English translation aims to present works of fifteen of the best known and most typical authors from the middle of the eighteenth century down to the most recent years; in the nineteen chapters there are two selections from Goethe and the last two chapters give books written by non-Germans about Germany. An effort has been made to present works that illustrate typical German traits and German moods, so that the reader who wishes to become acquainted with things German may be enabled to receive a kaleidoscopic view of the life and the ideals of this people as he sees them through the eyes of their countrymen. It is a vista that extends from eighteenth century enlightenment through classicism, romanticism, realism, down to the current post-war literature; there is high tragedy, idyll, philosophical closet drama, romancing, opera, problem play or novel, and hilarious comedy. A cross-section of an interesting, human, and energetic people.

Of the nineteen chapters Mr. Zucker is responsible for Goethe, Tieck, Pierce and Schreiber, Nietzsche, Hauptmann, Mann, Zuckmayer, and Powell. Mr. Friederich has covered Lessing, Schiller, Kleist, Keller, Wagner, Wassermann, Zweig, Fallada, Loens and Bithell.

On the general subjects suggested, reference works, such as the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, offer much information and illustrative material.

## CHAPTER I

### GOTTHOLD EPHRAIM LESSING, 1729-1781: *Nathan the Wise*

The religious unrest that lasted on in Germany more than a hundred years after Luther's death in 1546, the untold sufferings caused by the manifold foreign invasions in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the almost complete lack of a firm imperial central power, and also the absence of a uniformly acknowledged literary language, can be mentioned as reasons for the mediocrity of German literature prior to 1750. It is only when the German lands under Prussian rather than under Austrian leadership begin to rally anew, when the French, politically and culturally yield to English influences and alliances, and when such enlightened monarchs as Frederick the Great and Emperor Joseph II do away with the worst excesses of reckless and greedy absolutism, that German literature begins to flourish anew. The dates of Goethe's life, 1749-1832, include what one may truly call the Golden Age of German culture, in literature—Klopstock, Wieland, Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, Kleist, Novalis—as well as in philosophy—Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Schelling—and in music—Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert. In literature, the periods included in this epoch are designated by the critics as Enlightenment, Storm and Stress, Classicism, and Romanticism.

Lessing is the outstanding representative of philosophical, social, and religious enlightenment in Germany. He was the first modern author who took the risk of living by his pen without holding any official post and without courting the favor of some generous prince, as the court-poets of his time usually did. Proud of his absolute independence and unflinching in his convictions, he struggled through life as a literary critic in Berlin, a theatre director in Hamburg, and finally as a librarian in Braunschweig. Courageously, he attacked the abuses of the *ancien régime*, without, however, allowing himself to become as violent and revolutionary in his works as the poets of the "Storm and Stress." In his tragedy *Emilia Galotti* he pilloried the debauchery of absolutistic princes, while in his *Letters on Literature* he decried the injurious French influences in Germany, advising that German literary men should rather turn to England for inspiration; and he is the first Continental to appreciate unreservedly the full value and beauty of Shakespeare's dramas. Lessing also wrote the first modern German comedy of importance, *Minna von Barnhelm*, in which he extols the military virtues and the keen sense of honor of awakening Prussia. His essay *On the Education of Mankind*, written shortly before his death, dreams of Utopian future generations of proud and free men among whom reactionary governments, narrow-mindedness, ignorance and intolerance will have disappeared.

*Nathan the Wise*, a five-act drama laid in the time of the Crusades, shows Lessing's broad, tolerant religious attitude. As an en-

lightener, he had had to fight not only against absolutistic princes, but even more against orthodox dogmatists whose fanaticism made for hatred among Protestants, Catholics and Jews alike. Accused of atheism on account of his liberal though pious interpretation of the Scriptures, Lessing resorted to the drama for the best expression of his ideas—and the result is *Nathan*. Critics have found fault with the somewhat undramatic structure of this play; but the central idea is truly beautiful and the plea for understanding and tolerance is deeply impressive. The scene is Jerusalem in the twelfth century. Among the characters, Christian crusaders fighting to conquer the Holy Land, and Mohammedan defenders who under Sultan Saladin obstinately resisted the invading armies, we may well find that the Jewish merchant Nathan was the wisest and the most human figure in a world full of religious hatreds. Most famous of all and one of the most beautiful passages in the whole realm of German literature is the story of the Three Rings, which Nathan tells to Saladin when the latter asks him which of the three religions is the genuine one. Christians, Jews, and Mohammedans alike can easily recognize themselves in the three brothers, each of whom claims to be best beloved by his father and to be the sole possessor of the genuine ring, (that is, of truth) which their father was supposed to have left to only one of them. The parable of the Three Rings alone makes this drama great, and does honor to the courage and humanity of Lessing who, in a time when the Jews were still living in ghettos, dared to plead for justice and kindness, putting his noblest speech into the mouth of Nathan, the Jew.

#### *Subjects for Study*

1. Lessing and the Development of the German Drama.
2. The Character of the Patriarch in *Nathan the Wise* Contrasted with Nathan.
3. The History of the Ghetto in European Countries.

#### *Special References:*

*Nathan the Wise*, by G. E. Lessing.

*The Life of G. E. Lessing*, by T. W. H. Rolleston.

#### *Additional References:*

*Continental Drama*. (Contains Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm* and Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*.)

*The Chief European Dramatists*. (Contains Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm*, Goethe's *Goetz von Berlichingen*, Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*.)

*Literary and Philosophical Essays, French, German and Italian*. (Contains Lessing's *The Education of the Human Race*, Schiller's *Letters upon the Aesthetic Education of man*, Kant's *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals*, Mazzini's *Byron and Goethe*.)

## CHAPTER II

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE, 1749-1832: *Hermann and Dorothea*

In a widely accepted ranking of poets of the very first order Goethe stands as one of four, together with Homer, Dante and Shakespeare. There is indeed such a consummate finish of form, such profound insight into the human heart, such tolerant wisdom, and such universality in Goethe that few would dispute him a grouping with the greatest.

Goethe was born in the old city of Frankfurt on the Main, the son of well-to-do parents who offered him an excellent home training and every other educational advantage. The boy was decidedly gifted and took full advantage of his opportunities; as an example one might mention that in his early teens he made his father a birthday gift of a novel in letter-form in which the characters correspond in German, English, French, Italian, Latin, Greek and—the Jewish office boy—in Hebrew! At the age of sixteen he entered the University of Leipzig and later concluded his legal studies at Strassburg. Inspired by Lessing with a love for Shakespeare he won wide fame in 1773 with the play *Götz von Berlichingen* in the manner of Shakespeare's historical plays. In the following year he became internationally famous through the publication of the novel *The Sufferings of Young Werther*. Napoleon read this novel seven times; and in the room in which Washington died at Mount Vernon there hangs an old print picturing Werther and Lotte on their visit to the genial clergyman of the story.

In 1775 Duke Karl August invited Goethe to his court at Weimar where the young poet continued to live for fifty-seven years, until his death in 1832. Very early too he became famous for his exquisite lyrics, the finest in German literature. In addition to the dramas *Iphigenia*, *Egmont*, *Torquato Tasso*, *Faust*, the novels *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, *The Elective Affinities*, his autobiography *Poetry and Truth*, his *Italian Journey*, his translations of Aristophanes and Benvenuto Cellini, he also wrote widely on art, geology, botany and physics, while he is credited with an important discovery in the field of biology. At the same time he filled a number of administrative posts in the Duke's cabinet, involving duties ranging from the development of the mines to the recruiting of troops. From 1791 to 1816 Goethe was the stage manager of the Weimar Theatre and, through his painstaking supervision of the rehearsals, made this stage for the time being the most artistic theatre in the world. Surely it must be conceded that Goethe went a long way toward realizing the ideal he proclaims in *Faust*: development of all human faculties.

At the very height of his career Goethe published an epic which of all his works has enjoyed the greatest popularity with the German people. It tells in nine cantos—named in honor of the nine muses—a love story with historical events as a background; refugees from war-

invaded provinces are forced to seek a new home. In its hexameter verse form and other matters of style it follows the models of Homer's epics. The American reader will readily recognize the influence of this work of Goethe's on Longfellow's *Evangeline*.

While Goethe follows the Homeric model, he does so far from slavishly; for example, he does not employ the frequent Homeric similes and metaphors which would appear affected in the speech of German villagers. There is however a certain deliberation in the telling of the story and interrupting the dramatic course of events that is known as "epic breadth." The structure is extremely concentrated, since the entire action consumes perhaps ten hours, yet the reader is given a long vista down the years through the description of the parents' courtship. The contrast of the two generations is only one of many that show Goethe's art; the state of war contrasted with the peace of the village; the quiet afternoon and the violence of Hermann's outbreak; the former and the present *fiancé* of Dorothea, the artificiality of the rich man's daughter and Dorothea's naturalness; the German name Hermann and the Greek Dorothea; this contrast extends even to the smallest details, such as the father's dressing gown contrasted with fashionable modern garb.

It is with keen and thoughtful observation that Goethe portrays the different characters; the father, hardworking, ambitious, a bit of a domestic tyrant; the mother, full of loving care, common sense and determination; the pastor, young, modern, broadminded; the apothecary, the type of careful, timid bachelor; Hermann, deliberate, with a sense of values, considerate; Dorothea, frank, sensible, courageous, with a consciousness of her own dignity. We can see even the first *fiancé* of Dorothea, an idealistic zealot, exploited by selfish leaders. Above all of course the mature, kindly wisdom of Goethe is reflected in every line.

*Subjects for Study*

1. The Man Goethe.
2. *Hermann and Dorothea*.

What are the similarities in the plot of *Hermann and Dorothea* and Longfellow's *Evangeline*?

What does the character of the apothecary, an old bachelor, add to the effect of the story?

Compare the courtship of Hermann with that of his parents.

*Special References:*

*Goethe*, by Calvin Thomas. (A good study by an American.)

*Goethe, the History of a Man*, by Emil Ludwig. (A vivid if not sensational account of Goethe's life.)

*Hermann and Dorothea*, by J. W. v. Goethe.

*Additional References:*

Lewes, G. H. *Life and Works of Goethe*. (The biography that first introduced Goethe to English readers.)

Bielschowski, Albert. *Goethe*. Translated by W. A. Cooper. (A longer and perhaps the best biography of Goethe.)

Brown, P. H. *The Youth of Goethe*.

### CHAPTER III

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE, 1749-1832: *Faust*

The American translator of *Faust*, Bayard Taylor, has remarked that just as the Bible might be called the autobiography of the Jewish people, setting forth in various forms and styles the spiritual development of that nation, so *Faust* represents the autobiography of Goethe, giving in two widely differing parts, with numerous scenes and acts, the growth of the man through more than half a century of grappling with the problem of the meaning of life.

Goethe began the work in his twenties while he was quite under the spell of the "Storm and Stress Movement," a literary revolution during the latter part of the eighteenth century. In conformity with the ideals of that day he made Faust a reckless individualist with a disregard for the bounds of law and tradition, one who considered the genius to be beyond the conventions of ordinary mortals. Much of this early work was later revised, but the very selection of the rebel Faust as the hero is characteristic of this turbulent period in Goethe's life. In the following decade Goethe visited Italy and became deeply imbued with the charm of classic art, and as a consequence introduced into his life and writings a great deal of restraint. His study of the philosophy of Spinoza and his own investigations in the fields of botany and zoology, in which he anticipated the modern theory of evolution, led him to an optimistic belief in a universal law under which evil was an integral part of the good. Goethe's friendship with Schiller could not do otherwise than convince him of the force in human life of idealism—a devotion to a higher purpose.

The latter ideas are the dominating ones in *Faust* as Goethe published it. Through the words of the Lord in the "Prologue in Heaven" Goethe gives his answer to pessimistic cynicism such as Mephistopheles expresses regarding the nature of mankind:

Then stand abashed, when thou art forced to say:  
A good man, through obscurest aspiration,  
Has still an instinct of the one true way.

Nevertheless Mephistopheles makes the attempt to lead Faust away from his ideals into a life of idleness, sensuality, worship of power, or whatever things serve to induce men to cease from following the Gleam. Faust willingly accepts the devil's challenge and enters upon a bet with him:

When on an idler's bed I stretch myself in quiet,  
There let at once my record end!  
Canst thou with lying flattery rule me,  
Until, self-pleased, myself I see—  
Canst thou with rich enjoyment fool me,  
Let that day be the last for me!  
The bet I offer.

The action of the play sets forth Mephistopheles' efforts to imbue Faust with his own spirit of cynicism while he leads him through "the little world, and then the great," in the first and second parts respectively: Faust as an individual and Faust in relation to the phenomena of the development of man. In the second part Faust appears at the Emperor's court and gains a position through the introduction of a new financial system; he descends to the "Mothers" and evokes Helen of Troy; in the allegory of the third act the growth of Modern Poetry is portrayed as the union of the classical and northern (Helen and Faust); Faust takes part in a war in the service of the Emperor; and finally Faust reclaims land from the ocean, a deed in the service of humanity permitting a free people to live on a free soil. We must not interpret this last action as the final goal Goethe would set his hero—it is only one phase like many previous ones. Continual striving in the road of human progress is the goal and the individual phases are but parts of the endeavor of Faust, who becomes the symbol of mankind at its best. Faust has remained true to his ideal:

In marching onwards, bliss and torment find,  
Though, every moment, with unsated mind!

In view of the continual aspiration and idealism of Faust the poet expresses his approval of him by the fact that he lets Mephistopheles lose his bet as the angels bear Faust's soul to heaven:

The noble Spirit now is free,  
And saved from evil scheming;  
Whoe'er aspires unweariedly  
Is not beyond redeeming.

It is certainly not Goethe's intention to represent Faust as ideal or without imperfections—such a hero would have made an inadequate symbol for mankind. Just as humanity has waded through violence, bloodshed, and useless cruelty, so Faust walks a way that is not at all free from crime; but Goethe believes in human progress with a tolerance taught by long and thoughtful observation of life and all its evils. In the words of the Lord in the Prologue:

While man's desires and aspirations stir,  
He cannot choose but err.

Though the cynical Mephistopheles believes that reason which differentiates man from the lower animals is used by him merely "to be far beastlier than any beast"—and we who see the greatest inventions of science used to make wars more efficient might feel inclined to see a great deal of truth in this view—yet Goethe's other self, the idealistic, sees in man a wonderful creature winding his way up to progress and spiritual values. Who better than Goethe himself could serve as an illustration of what cultural heights man can attain?

*Subjects for Study*

1. The End of Marlowe's Doctor Faustus Compared with that of Goethe's Faust.
2. The Character Faust.  
To what extent is *Faust* autobiographical?  
Would Faust have been a symbol of struggling, striving mankind if he had been a perfect character?
3. The Character Mephistopheles.  
Contrast Mephistopheles, the cynic, with Faust, the man of ideals, especially in the scenes involving Margaret.

*Special References:*

*Faust*, by J. W. v. Goethe.

*Doctor Faustus*, by Christopher Marlowe.

*Goethe and Faust*, by G. L. Dickinson and F. M. Stawell.

*Additional References:*

Same as in preceding chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### FRIEDRICH SCHILLER, 1759-1805: *William Tell*

The exuberant and rebellious spirit of the Storm and Stress did not last long in Goethe and Schiller. In such a drama as *The Robbers* young Schiller extolled his vigorous and revolting hero who had broken with the rottenness of our civilization by becoming a robber and a law unto himself. In another drama, *Cabal and Love*, Schiller took up the old theme of attacking the *ancien régime*—as Lessing had done in his *Emilia Galotti*—by showing how arrogance, intrigues, and debauchery render impossible the marriage between a young aristocrat and a commoner, driving both of them to death. Such were the works of the Storm and Stress; full of defiance, and full of an earnest zeal for reform—a zeal that was often dangerous in its radicalism.

But both Goethe and Schiller soon gave up this realistic literature of “unbridled genius,” grew older, more restrained, more mature, and devoted themselves to a kind of literature so perfect and artistic in its blending of harmonious thought with harmonious style that we can truly call it classicism. Schiller could not, like his rich friend, Goethe, travel to Italy to admire there the plastic masterpieces of antiquity, thus educating his aesthetic senses. In poor health and in miserable circumstances, as he was most of his life, he could only attain maturity and beauty by sublimating his sufferings and by studying philosophy and history. His burning desire for freedom and his hatred of tyranny, which we find already in *The Robbers*, will be associated with Schiller forever; but in the later period he is no longer crusading for outer freedom, for revolutionary freedom in the sense of the Storm and Stress; he now searches for inner freedom, freedom to overcome one's passions and weaknesses. The stern philosophy of Immanuel Kant proved to be a great influence on him—and Kant dwelt on ethics more than on anything else, emphasizing that conscience should make it a categorical imperative in us to strive after ever greater perfection. The word “freedom” thus has lost the radical connotations of the soap-box orator for Schiller, the more so as he saw how such ill-used freedom, in the French revolution, soon degenerated into butchery and anarchy; instead “freedom” now meant self-restraint, discipline, moral courage to act as our conscience tells us. Through his studies of history—in 1789 he was appointed professor of history at the university of Jena—Schiller became fond of historical topics; indeed, all his later dramas are historical, exemplifying classical ideas. *Don Carlos*, the story of the struggle of Don Carlos and of his noble friend Marquis Posa against the tyrannical King Philip of Spain, shows best this slow transition in Schiller's thought, where the heroes fight and die no more for cheap slogans and egoistic motives, but for a much higher and loftier conception of freedom.

*William Tell* probably is the drama that best shows Schiller's ethical idealism. In this story of the origin of the Swiss Confederacy early in the thirteenth century, the Swiss do not rebel noisily and frivolously, as they would in a drama of the *Storm and Stress*. On the contrary, they are responsible burghers, men who time and again seek a decent reconciliation with their emperor; and only when tyranny and humiliation drive them to despair do they with heavy heart conspire to preserve the dignity and freedom, considered by them an inalienable right of mankind. *William Tell*, too, is no careless assassin who enjoys the task of freeing the country of a cruel governor; he shoots the fatal arrow only when outraged and driven to it. Nothing makes Schiller's ideas clearer to us than the scene where Tell, in the last act, meets Duke John who had just killed his uncle, the emperor. Both men have killed, it is true; but Tell does not fail to point out that there is a whole world of difference between a mean murderer who killed for selfish reasons, for greed, hatred, and thwarted ambition, and a defender of his country who, peaceful as he was, reached for his weapons only because he must for the sake of God, his country, and his family. Schiller had traveled a long road from his *Robbers* up to *William Tell*—and Kant's ethical teachings had been paramount in purifying the flame of freedom burning always in the poet's heart.

#### *Subjects for Study*

1. Friedrich Schiller.  
Compare the ideal of freedom in *Robbers* and *William Tell*.
2. *William Tell*.  
Early history of the Swiss Confederacy.  
What do you think is the reason for the appearance of Duke John of Austria in the last act of *Tell*?

#### *Special References:*

*Goethe and Schiller: their Lives and Works*, by H. H. Boyesen.  
*The Life and Works of Friedrich Schiller*, by Calvin Thomas.  
*Wilhelm Tell*, by Friedrich Schiller.

#### *Additional References:*

Nevinson, H. W. *Life of Friedrich Schiller*.  
*The Works of Schiller*. Edited by Nathan H. Dole.  
Smith, R. M. *Types of Historical Drama*. (Contains Schiller's *William Tell*, Kleist's *The Prince of Homburg*, Hebbel's *Agnes Bernauer*.)

## CHAPTER V

### JOHANN LUDWIG TIECK, 1773-1853: *Puss in Boots*

An anecdote illustrating the lengths to which eighteenth century rationalism went in destroying poetry by insisting on factualism, probability, and common sense is told of a clergyman who was revising the hymnbook. He found in a famous evening hymn the line, "The whole world is now at rest," but, because as a matter of fact the sun shines in Asia while Europe is in darkness, he changed the line to read, "Half the world is now at rest."

It was against prosy philistinism of this sort that Tieck in 1797 wrote his literary satire *Puss in Boots*. After the conclusion of his university studies he became associated with a group of rationalist writers in Berlin in a journalistic capacity. But after a few years he broke with this circle and became one of the leaders in the Romantic movement. "Ever let the Fancy roam" was the spirit of this somewhat clumsy, gouty man, out of whose bright blue eyes there shone the soul of a poet, as is evident in the sparkling lines of rare beauty in which he could epitomize all of Romanticism:

Magic night of moonlight skies,  
Captivating sense with glory,  
Wondrous world of elfin story,  
In your ancient splendor rise.

In Cervantes' *Don Quixote* Tieck saw the spirit of questing Romanticism in contrast to the rational *Sancho Panza*; his translation of the novel is one of the numerous examples in German literature of excellent translations by poets rather than by literary hacks. His name is likewise immortally associated with what has been called the greatest deed of German Romanticism—the *Schlegel-Tieck Shakespeare Translation*. This version of the great dramatist is of such verve and poetic excellence that it has made Shakespeare thoroughly familiar to the Germans, who give more performances of his plays in their theatres than does any other nation. Tieck was also very active in revealing to the Germans the beauty of their medieval architecture (despised by the classicists as "Gothic"), of sculpture and painting, of the great epics of chivalry such as the *Nibelungenlied*, and of the Minnesingers. He spent a year in Rome making a study of the medieval German manuscripts in the Vatican Library, and published numerous hitherto unknown gems of poetry.

If the Germans are conscious today of the beauty and unity of their cultural past it is due largely to Tieck and his fellow Romantics. In speaking of the aims of his youth, when he was attempting to interpret the charm of medieval art and life—at that time not yet scattered and destroyed by a more industrial age—he says:

To see, to feel, and to depict this varied world was my purpose; whatever is truly national in our works of painting,

sculpture, and architecture; what manners and customs are peculiar to each province and town; what physical conditions surround every individual tribe, moulding it and being moulded by it: all this was to be brought out as in a picture.

The noble race of the Austrians preserving in their mountains the mirth of by-gone days I wished to defend against modern misunderstanding; I wished to exalt the war-like and pious Bavarians; I wished to depict the gentle, thoughtful, and imaginative Suabians in their garden-like country; the sprightly gay Franconians with their romantic variegated landscape—to whom Bamberg was a German Rome; the spirited tribes along the lordly Rhine; the upright Hessians, the handsome Thuringians whose forests still preserve form and face of the old knights; the Low-Germans, resembling in true-heartedness the Dutch, in strength and skill the English. Thus I would wander through the dear valleys and mountains, through our noble lands, once so happy and great, traversed by Rhine and Danube and ancient sagas, guarded by mountains and castles and German bravery, bedecked with those meadows of matchless green in which there dwell such dear homeliness and simplemindedness. Truly, he who succeeded in reproducing thus from the depth of his feelings the features of his beloved fatherland would thereby have created a poem of most ravishing beauty.

The play, *Puss in Boots*, represents the battle of the Romanticists against the rationalism and sentimentality current in the literature of the day. The plot consists of the well-known fairy tale of the cat who sets out to win a kingdom for his kindly master, presented as a play within a play. The stage reveals also a group of spectators who make their comments on the play and in doing so satirize themselves. One of the most ridiculous commentators is a Weimar pedagog called by his real name Bötticher (spelled also Böttiger) who had written a book on the art of the actor Iffland in which he praises pedantically the attention this player gave to minute, homely details, while at the same time Bötticher displays his own erudition. In one of the first scenes of the second act the spectators, previously very critical, are moved to loud applause and tears by a "divine passage" between two lovers! The satire on the simplicity of the royal household is delicious, culminating perhaps in Hinze's remark that the court fool must get disgusted because so many are working at his trade! In the last scenes there is a burlesque on the excessive popularity of Mozart's *Magic Flute*—a work which, by the way, Tieck fully appreciated. Throughout the whole play there is hilarious fun at the expense of dull people who would apply to the stage conventions and to fairy tales the test of probability. *Puss in Boots* is not a profound drama but a clever satire which Tieck wrote in one day—yet full of meaning, for the pedants we have with us always.

*Subjects for Study*1. *Puss in Boots.*

Mention some examples of the author's destroying the illusion in the course of the action.

What qualities of royalty are satirized in the King?

2. *Puss in Boots and Midsummer Night's Dream Compared.**Special References:*

*German Classics of the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Vol. IV, edited by Kuno Francke. (This famous standard set of German translations contains Ludwig Tieck's *Puss in Boots* and two short stories.)

*Midsummer Night's Dream*, by William Shakespeare.

*Ludwig Tieck, the German Romanticist*, by E. H. Zeydel. (The only biography of Tieck in English, an excellent one, recently published.)

*Additional Reference:*

Pierce, F. E. and Schreiber, C. F. *Fiction and Fantasy of German Romance*. (This volume contains two short stories by Tieck.)

## CHAPTER VI

### HEINRICH VON KLEIST, 1777-1811: *The Prince of Homburg*

One of the unhappiest men of his generation was Heinrich von Kleist, who suffered so much from the humiliation and conquest of Germany by Napoleon's invading armies that in despair he committed suicide. The whole left bank of the Rhine had become French; southern German states had become vassals of France; Austria was defeated and the emperor's daughter forced into marriage with Napoleon; the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, after 1006 years of existence, was definitely destroyed by France, and what little unity there had been left in Germany was dissolved; the Prussian army, formerly so efficient under Frederick the Great, was annihilated at Jena and Auerstaedt, and while the French entered Berlin, the Prussian royal family had to escape to the farthest end of the kingdom on the Russian border.

As in politics, so also in literature we cannot help partly blaming the Germans themselves for having again become an easy prey to the French who for three centuries had regularly invaded their lands. The younger generation had heeded but little the teachings of discipline, self-restraint, and self-perfection emanating from Goethe, Schiller, and Kant. On the contrary: the rebellious exuberance of the "Storm and Stress" proved to be a direct precursor of some of the worst individualistic excesses of the Romanticists. Early Romanticism, as it appeared from 1790 on, by its very emphasis on man's individual free will undermined the state, as well as society and morality. Strong and good men may be a law unto themselves, may withstand the temptations of too much freedom; but for the masses, such unfettering is of no value and can only lead to national chaos and downfall. Only after this had happened did the Romantic poets become aware of their responsibility and of the danger in their preaching of reckless individualism. Later German Romanticism is therefore quite different from its earlier excesses; it is patriotic, in close contact with the people, admonishing them, inflaming them to strength and courage when the day of reckoning with the French would come. The publication of fantastic and immoral novels ceases and every man now joins the service of the fatherland.

Heinrich von Kleist hoped fervently to see the day of German freedom again and he worked frantically towards that end. His gloom and hatred against injustice and against France, dispelled for some time while he was in Switzerland, returned when, in Berlin, he was arrested by the French and for a short period imprisoned in France. His novel *Michael Kohlhaas* explains how a peasant, outraged in his sense of justice, may, like Schiller's *Robbers*, even become a thief and a murderer. *Forbidden to attack the French directly in his dramas*, he writes his *Battle of Herman*, extolling the victory of the

early Germanic tribes under the leadership of Herman (Arminius), against the invading Roman legions in the year 9 A. D.—but of course actually inciting the masses to a new victory by a new Herman against the invaders from beyond the Rhine.

*The Prince of Homburg* is one of the most remarkable dramas of that period because it shows best the gradual change from early romantic reckless individualism towards late romantic patriotism and military subordination. The time is shortly after the Thirty Years' War when Prussia, under the leadership of the Great Elector, tries to reconquer some of the territories taken from her by the peace treaty of Westphalia. The Prince of Homburg, one of the most important generals in the battle, is reckless, impulsive, thinking more of his lady-love than of the military orders he had received from headquarters. He disobeys those orders, acts as he pleases, and, though his brilliant attack wins the victory, yet he becomes guilty of technical insubordination in the face of the enemy. Hence he is jailed and condemned to be shot at dawn. At first he refuses to believe that his monarch could do more than submit him to a wholesome scare, but when he sees his grave prepared he collapses like a coward fearing death. In his last night the prince begins to see his fault, he realizes the necessity of discipline and the sternness of military orders. No more a reckless individualist, he admits that he was wrong, that there IS something above man and his will and his passions: his obligations to the fatherland. The play thus becomes the story of the education of a prince in Prussia—for it is only by a stern sense of duty and obedience, by an all-embracing love of their fatherland, that the Prussians could stop the foreign invasions and build up a new empire out of the ashes of the old one. We may not like or understand various details of this drama, such as the scenes showing the prince as a somnambulist, but the guiding thought behind it is clear, and was appreciated by all Germans in all days of national danger. Inspired by such a noble example the Germans finally did rally and in 1813 they rose as one man against Napoleon and in the end smashed his imperialistic designs at Waterloo—four years after Kleist's death.

*Subjects for Study*

1. A Short Sketch of the Life of Heinrich von Kleist.  
Prussia's rise to power in the 17th and 18th centuries.
2. *Michael Kohlhaas*.  
How far does Michael Kohlhaas agree with the theory of Prince Friedrich that the state's power over the individual is supreme?
3. *Prince of Homburg*.  
How does Kleist's drama represent the Prussian ideal of national discipline?

*Special References:*

*The Dramas of Heinrich von Kleist*, by John C. Blankenagel.  
*German Classics of the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Vol. IV, edited by Kuno Francke. (This contains the following works of Heinrich von Kleist: *Michael Kohlhaas* and *The Prince of Homburg*.)

## CHAPTER VII

*Fiction and Fantasy in German Romance* edited by Pierce and Schreiber

The volume forming the subject of this chapter is not an individual work of art but an anthology presenting some of the very best and most readable works of the German Romanticists. Its contents are in sharp contrast to Tieck's *Puss in Boots*, a drama that satirizes the weaknesses of the opponents of Romanticism and tells therefore only in a negative way what the Romanticists stood for; in the selections of the present book are choice items in which the authors give free reign to their fancy and revel in all that shocks the rational unimaginative philistines who insist on probability.

To define Romanticism is an almost impossible task, but something in a way of a definition can be achieved by enumerating a number of things done by these writers. The name they applied to themselves was derived from *roman*, that is romance or novel; and to be sure, this was their ideal form rather than the drama. Heinrich von Kleist is the only one among their number to gain distinction as a playwright, being as it were the exception that proves the rule. Furthermore, the Romanticists turned to medieval or Christian subjects rather than to classical antiquity. They loved the mysterious, dream-like, and picturesque, rather than the clear and well-formed. In fact, they considered any rules of composition as a distinct fettering of the free flight of imagination. They glorified the genius and his inspired moments, regarding him above all laws laid down by critics. Naturally they held fantasy and feeling to be superior to reason; they discovered the sub-conscious and turned to the dark sides of the mind, such as hypnotism, somnambulism, or uncanny forebodings. It was with a desire to approach the sub-conscious directly that many of these writers indulged in narcotics and other stimulants as an aid to literary inspiration.

Perhaps the most succinct definition of Romanticism—which however is far from covering the whole field—is: "Nostalgia for the unattainable"—the longing for a return to Nature, for the glory of the Middle Ages, for the color of the Orient, for the Isles of Greece where burning Sappho lived and sang, and in general

The desire of the moth for the star,  
Of the night for the morrow,  
The devotion to something afar  
From the sphere of our sorrow.

A charming expression of German Romanticism is to be found in Brentano's *Story of the Just Casper and the Fair Annie*. The description of the soft summer night where the nightingales had just stopped singing, the author collecting folk-songs among the common people, the dreams that later are fulfilled in all their horrors, the

suicide with the question of a proper burial, the popular superstition centering about the headsman's sword, the magical medicinal preparation used to seduce the honest maiden, and more than all else the true love whose course does not run smooth—until the lovers are united in their grave.

Much the same can be said for Eichendorff's story *The Marble Statue* where still another element of Romanticism is introduced: the glorification of the Virgin Mary in contrast to the pagan Venus. In this tale we drift along in a lyric mood with troubadours and lovely maidens before a background of enchanted palaces—of course, in Italy, the land of longing for northern poets.

Hoffmann had a marked influence on Edgar Allan Poe, both of them lovers of the gruesome and uncanny. Tieck's *Runenberg* has a distinct kinship with many stories told by Hawthorne, a comparison in which the great American artist by no means comes off second best. In fact, it may well give the American reader a certain satisfaction to know that our own poets of the earlier part of the nineteenth century moved in a world current of literature and produced some of the best stories of their age.

The volume is equipped with biographical introductions and lists of additional and comparative readings. These latter are especially suggestive for a fuller appreciation of the art of both the German and the American authors.

#### *Subjects for Study*

1. A Comparison of the *Story of the Just Casper and Fair Annie* with some American folk beliefs.
2. A Comparison of *Doppelgänger* with Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.
3. A Reading selected from Appendix C, page 392, *Fiction and Fantasy in German Romance*.

#### *Special References:*

*Fiction and Fantasy in German Romance*, by F. E. Pierce and C. F. Schreiber.

*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson.

#### *Additional References:*

Brandes, George. *Main Currents in 19th Century Literature*, Vol. II. (This is a most vivid account of German Romanticism.)

Porterfield, A. W. *An Outline of German Romanticism*, 1766-1866.

Robertson, J. G. *Outlines of the History of German Literature*.

## CHAPTER VIII

### RICHARD WAGNER, 1813-1883: *Lohengrin*

Richard Wagner, who through his rare combination of musical and poetic genius reached the peak of human artistic achievement, lived and worked in a time filled with disturbing political problems. The rising against Napoleon, in which the whole German people had taken part, had not, after 1815, led to the hoped-for freedom for the masses; on the contrary, under the leadership of the Austrian Prime Minister Metternich, the reactionary governments of the petty German princes ruled more despotically than ever. Nor had a second dream of the German nation been fulfilled, namely that the old German Empire, crushed by Napoleon, might be restored so that the scattered German states under one strong leadership could grow into new unity and power. This latter hope was frustrated especially because Austria, the leader in the old empire, was not ready to admit that her days were over and that Prussia, as the stronger, should assume leadership in the Second Reich. Hence all those troubled decades in German history of the nineteenth century during which the people had to fight against Metternich for a constitution and a parliament, and during which Prussia, against the will of Austria, had to weld Germany into a new unity. The revolution of 1848, the noblest and most idealistic revolution in history perhaps, prepared the way for a constitutional Prussian monarchy; the defeat of Austria by Prussia in 1866 prepared the way for a reunion of the German states (Austria excluded) under the leadership of Berlin, which was effected by Bismarck in 1871.

Richard Wagner, a fervent patriot, lived in the midst of these problems, and because of his participation in the revolution of 1848 was for many years an exile in Switzerland. Back in Germany, he was afforded the personal support of the music-loving King Ludwig II of Bavaria and thus he finally succeeded in establishing, in Bayreuth, a unique center of German art and music. Wagner's works are not filled with politics as were the works of the revolutionary "Young Germans" of 1848; because of his love of German national history and of the glory that was the Middle Ages, we might rather call him a late Romanticist. Medieval hero myths and legends were the choice of this immortal music composer, who at the same time was a poet writing the texts—works of literary value, no mere librettos—for his own operas. Indirectly, however, we may call even Wagner a political propagandist, for in those times when the possible foundation of a Second Reich was so ardently discussed, nobody was more eager than he to show the greatness and the cultural depth of the First Reich, the Holy Roman Empire. Except for *The Flying Dutchman* and *Tristan and Isolde*, we find only German national legends in his operas: *The Ring of the Nibelungs*, a tetralogy of old Germanic mythology; *Tannhäuser*, describing to us the contest in song held at the

Wartburg by such German minnesingers as Wolfram von Eschenbach, Walter von der Vogelweide, and Tannhäuser; *Parsifal*—an adaptation of Wolfram von Eschenbach's story of the unfaltering German God-seeker Parsifal who goes through sin and despair until he finds Him; and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, with one of the most lovable figures of German literature, Hans Sachs, an ardent supporter of Luther, as its hero.

*Lohengrin* is another patriotic opera laid in the tenth century when the Saxon emperor was attempting to build up a national German Reich and to hold it against all attacks from the Northwest and the Southeast. Into this historical background is woven the love-story of Lohengrin, son of Parsifal, and Elsa of Brabant, culminating in the unhappy ending of this union between an immortal knight and a mortal woman, because she, through curiosity, could not resist asking the forbidden question about his name and origin. In the sinister machinations of Ortrud and in her final defeat, Wagner also wished to show the victory of Christianity over the heathen powers of darkness. The ill-fated attempts of superhuman heroes to be happy like mortals, and to forget about their divine mission in the world, is a very popular topic in German literature; Schiller's *Maid of Orleans*, Kleist's *Penthesilea*, and Grillparzer's *Sappho* likewise had to learn that the fulfilment of a great task is incompatible with mortal love and happiness. We may perhaps even regard *Lohengrin* as a confession in regard to Wagner's own life—for he too was a great genius, living in the lofty atmosphere of pure thought and music, destined to be lonely and rarely to find companionship among men and women.

#### *Subjects for Study*

1. A Short Sketch of the Life of Wagner.
2. The Aims of the Revolution in 1848.
3. *Lohengrin*.

Study the relationship of Wagner to his King, Louis II of Bavaria.

As a background to *Lohengrin* discuss the Holy Grail and Parsifal.

#### *Special References:*

*My Life*, by Richard Wagner.  
*Lohengrin*, by Richard Wagner.

#### *Additional References:*

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Case of Wagner*.  
Finck, Henry T. *Wagner and his Works*.  
Golther, Wolfgang. *Richard Wagner as Poet*.  
Newman, Ernest. *Wagner as Man and Artist*.  
Weston, Jessie L. *The Legends of the Wagner Drama*.  
Brownell, Gertrude. *The Wagnerian Romances*.

## CHAPTER IX

### GOTTFRIED KELLER, 1819-1890: *The People of Seldwyla and Seven Legends*

After the upheaval of 1848 and the successful war against Austria, there followed in Germany a war against France. Napoleon III opposed Bismarck's unifying policy because he was aware that if the various German states should unite into a solid Second Reich, the French hegemony over Europe would be broken. From 1871 on, after the defeat of France and the actual foundation of the new German empire, Germany rode on the crest of power, prosperity, and expansion into the era of Hohenzollern imperialism which ended so disastrously in 1918. Material progress and national pride stood so very much in the foreground in this new state that its cultural life lagged behind, so that the greatest authors writing in the German language at that time were not in Germany, but in Switzerland and in Austria.

Swiss literature generally suffers from the disadvantage that its outstanding works are rarely acknowledged as Swiss. If they are written in German they are claimed as belonging to German literature; if in French, to French literature. The two greatest Swiss authors in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, J. J. Rousseau and Mme de Staél, were French Swiss; the two greatest Swiss authors in the later nineteenth century, Gottfried Keller and Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, were German Swiss.

Gottfried Keller, a native of Zürich, is one of the best exponents of the realism that prevailed in the German literature of that time. The revolutionary "Young Germans" of 1848 had, in their works, clamored only for political freedom, becoming actual propagandists, like Heinrich Heine. In the succeeding generation the realistic authors turned away from heated political discussion, back to the simpler and more beautiful things, describing the life and the people of their particular province, of the Black Forest (Auerbach), of Westphalia (Immermann), of Styria (Rosegger) or of the Lowlands near the North Sea (Storm). Gottfried Keller, in such collections of novels as *The People of Seldwyla* and *Novels from Zürich*, represents the genuinely Swiss side of that *Heimatliteratur*. As a young man, Keller had long been in doubt as to whether he should become painter or poet, and studied art in Munich for several years. When he finally published his first collection of Swiss novels, his appreciative fellow-citizens made him state-clerk of the canton of Zürich—thus indirectly confirming an unwritten rule among the Swiss that a poet should not just write for art's sake, but that he, as a responsible citizen, should also serve and further the interests of the country.

The term *poetic realism* is certainly justified in Keller's beautiful and lucid descriptions of the Swiss countryside and of life among the good and the bad, the industrious and the lazy in his imaginary

village of Seldwyla. In the novel *The Three Righteous Combmakers*, Keller, kindly and optimistic as ever, appreciates even petty bourgeois virtues of Seldwyla, calling thrift what might easily be called greed, virtue what might be considered moral narrowness, ambition what is nothing but sheer jealousy. He tells his stories in a straightforward fashion, and he is loath to moralize or to condemn the ways of this world. Also his star-crossed lovers Sali and Vreneli, in *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, are from Seldwyla, and the tale of their courageous though unsuccessful struggle against tremendous odds is told in a style that is truly classical in its plastic beauty. The plot of the story, depicting humble peasant children, is quite similar to Shakespeare's great drama, but we may call this novel somewhat exceptional for Keller, because it ends tragically.

Free from the fanaticism and dogmatism that had again stirred up a religious war in Switzerland in 1847, Keller shows a kindly sympathy with the naive belief of the people in miracles, and the *Seven Legends*, a beautiful little series of novels, indicates clearly how utterly adverse he is to intolerance. The Virgin Mary, in these novels, is much more human and understanding than the dogmas of the church would make us believe. In *The Virgin as Nun*, she takes the place of a young novice who had run away and who returned to the nunnery twenty years later, after having born eight sons to her husband—and nobody had even noticed her absence, because the Virgin had performed all convent duties in her place. Similar acts of kindness Saint Mary performs in the other legends, as for example in *The Virgin as Knight*, a novel in which she helps an idealistic young knight to win his lady-love.

To the Swiss of today, Keller has become the greatest representative of true democracy and bourgeois ideals. For even he could not always refrain from introducing a slight political note into his novels, staunchly defending liberalism and the constitution, and voicing his faith in the soundness of popular representation. Keller's patriotism, so beautifully expressed in one of his poems

Oh my Switzerland, thee alone I crave!  
When at last my happy goal is won,  
Though I naught have done, thy weakling son,  
Ah, deny him not a quiet grave.

is deeply felt, quiet, almost religious, and thus in great contrast to the boisterous nationalism of pre-war Europe. As a man and a citizen, Keller embodies best all the things for which Switzerland stands: moderation, tolerance, neutrality, and, above all, an unswerving faith in democracy and in the country's stability—and today, with Switzerland surrounded by dictatorships, Keller is more than ever appreciated by his fellow-countrymen.

*Subjects for Study*

1. Keller's Life and Times.
2. *The People of Seldwyla and Seven Legends.*  
Compare his appreciation of the religion of the Middle Ages with the poetic fancy.  
The philosophy of life of the people of Seldwyla.  
Contrast Keller's and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

*Special References:*

*The People of Seldwyla and Seven Legends*, by Gottfried Keller.  
*Romeo and Juliet*, by William Shakespeare.  
*German Classics*, Vol. 14, edited by Kuno Francke. (This contains an essay on the life and works of Keller.)

*Additional References:*

*German Classics*, Vol. 14. Consult for the following:  
Keller, Gottfried, *The Company of the Upright Seven*; *The Governor of Greifensee*; *Ursula*.  
Immermann, K. L. *The Oberhof*.  
Storm, Theodor. *The Rider of the White Horse*.  
Rosegger, Peter. *The Forest Schoolmaster*.  
Auerbach, Berthold. *Little Barefoot*.

## CHAPTER X

### FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, 1844-1900: *Thus Spake Zarathustra*

One of the greatest figures in world literature of the nineteenth century was Friedrich Nietzsche, "the prophet of the Superman." This philosopher and poet sounded a refreshing blast against the romantic pessimism widely current in his day, and called men to greater things far above the level of comfortable mediocrity. He accepted the theory of evolution; adding that we should strive to become supermen, beings as far above men as men are above the lower animals. For this reason he was opposed to socialism and similar doctrines that would reduce all men to the same level; along with Emerson in America, Carlyle in England, and Ibsen in Norway, he believed in the development of the highest type of aristocratic individual—to be sure an aristocracy of mind and spirit, not of birth or wealth.

His was a philosophy that held life to be a good thing and a joy; Christianity, and other doctrines teaching that this world is nothing but a preparation for the next, he caustically condemned. The chief vehicle for his teaching was his own conception of the prophet Zarathustra, whose sayings, written in rhythmic prose, are of rare force and charm. *Thus Spake Zarathustra* contains an epitome of all Nietzsche's doctrines and presents the writer in his most poetic and forceful mood.

Nietzsche was the son of a clergyman in eastern Germany. He attended a famous preparatory school, Schulpforta, and then the University of Leipzig, devoting himself to classical philology. He distinguished himself to such an extent that at the age of twenty-four he was given an appointment as professor at the University of Basel, while his own university awarded him a doctor's degree without even the formality of an examination. Nietzsche was also a fine musician and for some time a close friend of Richard Wagner. After a few years of lecturing, however, Nietzsche's health became so poor that he was forced to retire on a pension. He then lived very simply in the mountain regions of northern Italy, in whose invigorating climate he wrote the works that have made his name known round the world. At the age of forty-five he broke down under the tremendous strain of the mental labor with which he had worn himself out. He lingered for a decade, his brilliant mind utterly deranged. One of his short poems characterizes his restless, eager spirit and explains his early decline:

Yes, I know where I'm related,  
Like the flame, unquenched, unsated,  
I consume myself and glow:  
All's turned to light I lay my hand on,  
All to coal that I abandon.  
Yes, I am a flame, I know!

Nietzsche puts his teachings into the mouth of Zarathustra (or

Zoroaster), the prophet of the Persians, because in the latter's optimistic religion the forces of good with the aid of man gradually overcome the forces of evil. In the prologue we find Zarathustra after a long preparation in solitude descending to the plains to teach men. He addresses the sun, an object of worship among the Persians. As the prophet goes down to men he realizes that his will be a martyrdom such as other prophets suffer. In the German text there is a play on words meaning both to "go down" and "to perish." His reception by the mob is typical—the crowd prefers a rope dancer to words of wisdom. But he gives them the definition of the great ideal he is going to set before men: the Superman.

*I teach you the Superman.* Man is something that is to be surpassed. What have ye done to surpass man?

What is the ape to man? A laughing stock, a thing of shame! And just the same shall man be to the Superman; a laughing stock, a thing of shame!

Ye have made your way from the worm to man, and much within you is still worm. Once ye were apes, and even yet man is more of an ape than any of the apes.

Many have misunderstood Nietzsche, saying that he taught freedom from all moral restraints and a yielding to all impulses toward indulgence. The chapter "Three Metamorphoses," that is, the three changes which a man must undergo before he can approach the ideal of the Superman, shows that Nietzsche's teachings are not for the self-indulgent weakling. "Be hard," he is constantly saying, and he means that one is to be hardest in the demands he makes on himself. One must be enduring as a camel in bearing heavy burdens. With courage like a lion's one must be ready to face opposition and to fly in the face of public opinion—as the great men of all times have done. Thirdly one must be like a child—spontaneous and simple, with a belief in his cause. His course of action must be second nature to him.

To illustrate the ardor with which Nietzsche speaks to idealistic youth, a short passage from the chapter "The Youth by the Tree" may here be quoted in conclusion: "But by my love and hope I conjure thee: cast not away the hero in thy soul! Maintain holy thy highest hope!"

*Subjects for Study*

1. A Short Sketch of the Life of Friedrich Nietzsche.
2. *Thus Spake Zarathustra.*
  - His contempt for the mob.
  - His opinion of the monk and others who despise this world.
  - His acceptance of this world as a joyous adventure.

*Special References:*

*Thus Spake Zarathustra*, by Friedrich Nietzsche.

*The Life of Nietzsche*, by Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche. (A very readable, if decidedly favorable, life of Nietzsche by his sister.)

*Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche*, by H. L. Mencken. (A vivid introduction to Nietzsche.)

*Additional References:*

The complete works of Nietzsche, translated by Oscar Levy, have been published by the Macmillan Company.

## CHAPTER XI

GERHART HAUPTMANN, 1862- : *The Weavers*

With the increasing industrialization of Germany in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the class struggle between the wealthy element and the proletariat became more and more acute. It expressed itself in the enormous growth of the Socialist Party with its demand for greater social justice, and also in the writings of numerous "bourgeois" authors of the realistic or naturalistic school, whose sense of social pity had led them to picture the misery of the masses. From this struggle there resulted all the social legislation in which Germany led the world, such as unemployment insurance, workmen's compensation laws, old age pensions, child labor regulation, factory inspection laws, compulsory continuation schools, and numerous other attempts to improve social conditions. The paternalistic government came to take an interest in the welfare of its citizens—particularly of course the poorer classes—from the cradle to the grave, thereby allaying in part the social unrest and stealing much of the Socialists' thunder. Likewise this paternalism tended to make the average German citizen subservient toward the Government and its officials.

The best example from this period of literary work making an appeal for social justice is Hauptmann's drama, *The Weavers*, 1892. Gerhart Hauptmann was born in Silesia, and, after first trying his hand at sculpture in a studio in Rome, he discovered his true calling as an author when in 1889 his first drama *Before Sunrise* scored a sensational success in Berlin. In his earlier works he followed the theories of the "consistent naturalists" who demanded on the part of the author complete objectivity for the purpose of making the drama as life-like as possible, and also the avoidance of everything "theatrical," such as heroics, monologs, asides, and "poetic" dialog above the level of ordinary conversation; often the dialog was ungrammatical, or in dialect, carefully suited to each speaker. Since the naturalists were skeptical in regard to the traditional moral order of the universe, their dramas did not end in the expiation of tragic guilt but generally concluded with a question mark.

In *The Weavers* we can observe how this principle is followed out. It is a drama without a hero—the chief protagonist is no outstanding individual but rather the whole class of the weavers. They are represented in numerous differentiated types—the humble Heiber, the pious Hilse, the gradually enraged Baumert, the impudent Baecker, and Moritz Jaeger who has learned of conditions in the outside world; yet withal there are more similarities than differences in all these weavers. The stage settings are described in great detail, giving a very realistic background for the life of the exploited poor. On the whole, the characters suffer rather than act—the destruction of the house of the employer at the end of the fourth act is almost the only

"dramatic" happening. The ending of the play, inconclusive as it is, gives the author's conception of the endless character of the struggle, opening a vista down the vast course of history, during which the thoughtless greed of the rich has over and over again driven the lower classes to bloody revolt. The death of the pious Hilse, who refuses to rebel, illustrates the author's view of the indifference of Nature toward the individual and his disbelief in the kindly providence of Hilse's religion. With all its stark realism the drama is not without poetic touches, such, for example, as the family devotions at the beginning of the fifth act.

The delineation of the employer and the other figures from the upper classes shows beyond a doubt that Hauptmann's sympathy lay with the weavers. The play is propaganda, a ringing call for pity for the oppressed, but at the same time it is a notable work of art.

Hauptmann later turned from naturalism to neo-romanticism in such poetic plays as *The Sunken Bell*, to psychological dramas such as *Michael Kramer*, to symbolism in *Pippa Dances*, and to the writing of comedies such as *The Beaver Coat*. He has also published novels, among them *Emanuel Quint*, *the Fool in Christ*, a profound study of a religious enthusiast, portraying what might happen if Christ were to appear in modern society. Hauptmann, now well over seventy, has for decades been regarded as the dean of German writers.

#### *Subjects for Study*

1. Life of Gerhart Hauptmann.
2. *The Weavers*.

Is the exposition in Act I designed to arouse social pity?  
Contrast the stage setting in *The Weavers* with those given in a play by Shakespeare.  
Compare *The Weavers* with Galsworthy's *Strife*.

#### *Special References:*

*The Weavers*, by Gerhart Hauptmann.  
*Strife*, by John Galsworthy.

*The Modern Drama*, by Ludwig Lewisohn. (Contains an excellent account of Hauptmann's work.)

#### *Additional References:*

The dramatic works of Hauptmann, translated by Ludwig Lewisohn, have been published by Viking Press.

Hauptmann, Gerhart. *The Book of Passion*. (An autobiographical novel presenting a good account of the author's youth.)

## CHAPTER XII

THOMAS MANN, 1875- : *Buddenbrooks*

Thomas Mann's greatest novel, *Buddenbrooks*, published in 1901, follows to a large extent the then current fashion of realism, especially in the detailed, documented descriptions and the imitation of dialectical speech peculiarities, but it is also affected very much by the neo-romanticism of the day. Its introduction of subjective notes by the author and of a delightful irony are in the manner of the romantic writers; romantic too is the main theme of Mann's literary output: the contrast between the solid, sensible bourgeois and the inspired but erratic artist. When our author is writing on this theme he is presenting his own life and thought, symbolized in the various contrasting characters which he portrays with romantic realism.

Thomas Mann was born in the old Hanseatic town of Lübeck, the descendant of a patrician family of merchants. His early training was that of a merchant, in order that he might continue in the traditions of his house, but he dropped this for the purpose of giving free rein to the artistic side of his nature. He attended lectures at the University of Munich, traveled in Italy, worked on the staff of a Munich weekly, and when only twenty-six years of age established his fame as an author by the publication of *Buddenbrooks*. Since that time he has published a number of novels (most of them, including *The Magic Mountain*, have been translated into English), as well as essays on literary and political subjects, all written in the extremely deliberate and painstaking manner natural to this artist, who feels impelled by the bourgeois part of his heredity to labor with punctilious conscientiousness for fear that his artistic nature may appear bohemian or frivolous. There has never been in Germany a writer who weighs each phrase more carefully than does Mann.

*Buddenbrooks* is a genealogical novel telling the story of four successive generations, a *genre* introduced in the seventies by Emile Zola with his *Rougon-Macquart* series and later adopted by writers of numerous countries. Best known example to readers of English literature is Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga*, begun in 1906 with *The Man of Property* and closed in 1922 with *To Let*. Like *Buddenbrooks*, Galsworthy's masterpiece pictures the history of a middle class family, being a study in gradual disintegration, but *The Forsyte Saga* is much more diffuse and far less unified than the earlier German novel.

Thomas Mann's tale begins about 1830 with the house-warming celebration in the new mansion of the head of the firm Johann Buddenbrook. Wealth and elegance in the French fashion of the day distinguish the house. In the following generation Konsul Buddenbrook introduces more Puritanic customs and upholds the standing of the firm. However, in the third generation, that of Thomas and Christian Buddenbrook, the decline sets in; the wealth of the family

sinks and the election of Thomas as senator reflects only a deceptive glory on the old house. Thomas is at heart not really a business man; his son Hanno is altogether an artist, a delicate soul not able to cope with life. After the death of Senator Thomas the firm and the family mansion are sold; there is left no male Buddenbrook to continue the family tradition. Mann considers the artist as something of a degeneration, a creator of beauty but a spirit too tired and too ennobled for the rough and tumble of a life of action.

It is interesting to note how Mann's art becomes more subtle and refined as the characters he describes become more complex. The robust earlier generations are pictured in a sketchy manner, while dozens of pages are consumed in the portrayal of the mental and nervous processes of Thomas and Hanno. Mann's skill as a writer shows itself in his knack for character portrayal through little idiosyncrasies, in his death-bed scenes, in the conjuring-up of a historical period in a few striking paragraphs, and especially in the kindly irony with which he views the life of man. For, it need hardly be stated, the rise and decline of the Buddenbrooks is profoundly symbolical of their entire century.

#### *Subjects for Study*

1. Thomas Mann.
2. *Buddenbrooks*.

Construct a family tree of the Buddenbrooks family and compare it with the one published in Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga*.

Comment on the idiosyncrasies of the main characters.

In which characters are the solid bourgeois and the sensitive artist portrayed?

#### *Special References:*

*Buddenbrooks*, by Thomas Mann.

*Forsyte Saga*, by John Galsworthy.

*A Panorama of German Literature, from 1871 to 1931*, by Félix Bertaux.

#### *Additional References:*

Mann, Thomas. *The Magic Mountain; Stories of Three Decades*.  
Weigand, H. J. *Thomas Mann's Zauberberg*.

## CHAPTER XIII

CARL ZUCKMAYER, 1896- : *The Captain of Köpenick*

In the pre-war Germany of 1906, with its preëminently efficient army and its smart, overbearing officers, there occurred an incredible event. A cobbler, who had never been in the army because he had spent most of his adult life in penitentiaries, masquerading in a second-hand uniform, commanded a squad of soldiers from a barracks near Berlin to follow him to the town hall of the suburb Köpenick, there had the mayor arrested and convoyed under guard to Berlin, while he helped himself to the treasury and escaped. For some time he was at liberty, until another ex-convict betrayed him to the police. When the story became known through the newspapers there was loud laughter on the part of the Socialists, who felt that the episode showed up the unthinking spirit of militarism as nothing else could have done. But the defenders of the army saw in the obedience of the soldiers to the cobbler in captain's uniform the brave spirit of the soldier—"theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do or die" as Tennyson, the British poet laureate, sang of some misguided English soldiers. The episode was so hilarious that, if memory serves me correctly, Wilhelm Voigt, "the Captain of Köpenick," was sentenced for his robbery, but pardoned before the expiration of his prison term.

This comic episode was made the subject of a play by Carl Zuckmayer, an author, who in the last decade has given the German stage its most popular comedies. He was born in Nackenheim, a village on the Rhine, and is a man full of the hearty joviality of the wine country. Two of his previous successes were *Katherine Knie*, an episode in the life of a famous acrobat, and *The Jolly Vineyard*, a rollicking comedy filled with the spirit of the autumn in the land of the wine-presses.

When Zuckmayer turned to the story of the so-called "Captain of Köpenick" he approached it without either a pro- or anti-military bias, but rather with the spirit of social pity. The kernel of the story was for him the misery which in most countries stalks the man who has once been in prison, making a marked man of him. As an ex-convict the hero of the story has been under police surveillance, frequently losing jobs when his past became known; at the same time he was refused papers for emigration. The fact that Wilhelm Voigt had been driven to his bold escapade by his desire to steal a passport from the city hall makes of the play a bitter indictment of self-righteous society which refuses to allow the fallen a chance to rise.

Carl Zuckmayer is more than a propagandist; as an artist he views this episode under the aspect of eternity. In the introduction to the play he compares the story to another famous robbery, that told by the Grimm Brothers in the fairy-tale of *The Town Musicians*

of *Bremen*. It would indeed be difficult to say which of the two stories is the more fantastic! In both Zuckmayer discovers the boldness of the perennial spirit of adventure that refuses to give up or surrender—"one can always find something better than Death!"

From the very first scene at the tailor's, where the famous uniform is ordered, through the droll adventure of the robbery of the town hall, down to the very last scene of the captured robber looking at himself in the mirror, there runs a spirit of bubbling humor. This reaches its highest point perhaps in the oblique comparison of the cobbler—who in prison had enjoyed reading history—to the superman Napoleon. The police chief asks:

You simply went and stopped the first squad of men you found on the street and went off with them to Köpenick?

Voigt: I put on the uniform—and then I gave myself an order—and then I went off and carried it out.

Chief: Well, you were certainly lucky, no one can deny that.

Voigt: Luck enters into all military operations, sir. Luck is the first requirement in a commander, Napoleon himself said.

#### *Subjects for Study*

1. Tell the story of Wilhelm Voigt before he became the Captain of Köpenick.
2. The play, *The Captain of Köpenick*: give a review of it with the following points in mind:  
Discuss Tennyson's *Charge of the Light Brigade*—its history and its underlying philosophy.  
What is the view of the world as expressed in Grimm's fairy tale *The Town Musicians of Bremen*?  
What importance is attached to the uniform in the play, *The Captain of Köpenick*?

#### *Special Reference:*

Zuckmayer, Karl: *The Captain of Köpenick*.

Very little of Zuckmayer's work has as yet been translated into English. Félix Bertaux, *A Panorama of German Literature from 1871 to 1931*, discusses his work briefly and gives a bibliography of it. (See Special References, Chapter 12.)

## CHAPTER XIV

ARNOLD ZWEIG, 1887- : *The Case of Sergeant Grischa*

The short-lived dream of a Second German Reich came to an end when Germany, fighting desperately against twenty odd nations, losing two million men at the front and almost one million civilians due to starvation, lost the Great War of 1914-18. German literature dealing with that dark and yet heroic period represents not only the various aspects of the war itself, but also the political and moral lessons drawn by the authors from the fall of a great empire. Poems and letters of soldiers killed in action have been collected and published with reverent care; but naturally more widely read than poems, letters, or dramas, are the novels about the war. Renn's *War* and Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* are especially famous. Gläeser's *Class of 1902* discusses the sufferings of the civilians, of mothers and children, their educational, economic, and sex problems, while Toller's play *Draw the Fires!* is communistic propaganda, treating the mutiny in the German Navy in 1917.

Among all these more or less realistic records of the war Zweig's *The Case of Sergeant Grischa* seems to approach most nearly toward deserving the name of "literature." Born in 1887 and receiving a thorough academic education at various German universities, Zweig might have remained a novelist dealing psychoanalytically with the moral and social problems of the refined upper classes in Germany—such as his episodic novel *Claudia* represents him to be—if the Great War had not suddenly torn him from this atmosphere and put him into the trenches before Verdun. *The Case of Sergeant Grischa* is the central piece in a series of three war-novels entitled *A Trilogy of the Transition*. Bertin, one of the heroes in this trilogy, is Zweig himself, for both Bertin and Zweig received their "Education before Verdun"—the title of the first volume of the trilogy—and were later transferred to the Eastern Front, where Bertin witnessed the final stage in the struggle to save Grischa's life. In *The Case of Sergeant Grischa*, Zweig not only speaks of the individual, of Grischa, an innocent Russian prisoner shot in spite of all efforts of right-minded men, because the red-tape of German bureaucracy and militarism had to have the letter of the law fulfilled, but he makes Grischa the symbol of the underdog in general, the symbol of the whole of mankind that suffers, hopes and dies without knowing why. The whole book is an accusation against that worst of all molochs, brute Force. Here, Force is represented by the State, by War, by General Headquarters, by the pitiless General Schieffenzahn—and for the innocent man who once gets into its machinery, into the killing clutches of its paragraphs, there is absolutely no escape. Not Grischa, not the war in Russia, not the noble efforts of decent men like Bertin are the important things in this book—but the realization that the machinery of war is

a monster bigger and more powerful than any man; that we have created and let loose a Frankenstein that can kill us all and that can be stopped by no one. It is this aspect on which the reader should ponder, to the end that we should never allow the creation to become more powerful than its creator.

*Subjects for Study*

1. The Character of Arnold Zweig as Revealed in *Bertin*.
2. *Sergeant Grischa*.

What similarities and differences are there in the attitude towards war in Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Zweig's *Sergeant Grischa*?

How do Schieffenzahn and Grischa to a certain extent symbolize the Prussian and the Slavic type of man?

*Special References:*

*The Case of Sergeant Grischa*, by Arnold Zweig.

*All Quiet on the Western Front*, by Erich Maria Remarque.

*Additional References:*

Zweig, Arnold. *Claudia*.

Renn, Ludwig. *War*.

Remarque, Erich Maria. *The Road Back*.

Glaeser, Ernst. *Class of 1902*.

Toller, Ernst. *Seven Plays*.

Plivier, Theodor. *Kaiser's Coolies*.

Thomas, Adrienne. *Katrin Becomes a Soldier*.

Unruh, Fritz von. *Way of Sacrifice*.

## CHAPTER XV

JAKOB WASSERMANN, 1873-1934: *The World's Illusion*

German post-war literature is almost as chaotic and uncertain of itself as was the political life during this period of revolutions, foreign invasions, and monetary inflation. Between thirty and forty political parties tried to govern in the Reichstag, indicating by their endless and petty meddlings how helplessly divided the nation was. The literature is a true reflection of these political conditions—there is not one trend, not one school dominating, but expressionism, impressionism, neoclassicism, naturalism, neoromanticism, and a host of other -isms intermingled. Nor does literature any longer express lasting thoughts in harmonious and beautiful form, as in the time of Goethe; it is devoted to political purposes, as in 1848, the authors acting as preachers or demagoggs, as prophets or scientists who analyze and diagnose the ills of society. The rightist conservative elements were mostly sullen and silent, awaiting the end of the Republic, which to them meant weakness, shame and dissension. Politics and literature alike were dominated by the leftists, whose ranks were to an astonishing degree made up of Jews.

From a nationalistic viewpoint it cannot be denied that there is something destructive in this post-war German-Jewish literature, in Werfel, Zweig, Schnitzler, Wassermann, Feuchtwanger, and others. The psychoanalytical theories of Sigmund Freud led many of them to overemphasis on sexual problems; others, deeply shaken by the horrors of the war and the collapse of the old order, indeed of the *bourgeoisie* itself, haltingly tried to find their way to new goals and new ideals, sometimes openly leaning toward communism. The Jew, oppressed and humiliated in the old order of bygone centuries, can never expect any good from any reactionary government which would try to retrace the steps of human development; hence the essentially revolutionary character of so many Jewish books, that push forward to new standards, where bias and intolerance, at least as far as the Jews are concerned, would no more exist. With their keen intellect, they attack the vices of Prussian militarism, the faults of many branches in the German government, the injustice of many laws, the hypocrisy of bourgeois morals, or the cruelties of the capitalistic system. Theirs was the task of being "debunkers"—and it is only to be regretted that they often went too far in their nihilism and that their radicalism precipitated the growth of National Socialism.

Jakob Wassermann, born in the Bavarian industrial city of Fürth, had to go through a miserable life of poverty, degradation and racial bias, before he, formerly a humble clerk, found at last success and recognition in Vienna. Especially such novels as *The Goose Man*, *Caspar Hauser*, *The Maurizius Case*, brought him wealth and fame—but even so, in his luxurious villa in the Bavarian Alps, amidst his

precious art collections, he continued writing of the miserable city life he knew in his youth, with its hunger, its intolerance and its suffering. He was an industrious worker, a voracious reader, and devoted himself so thoroughly to the characters of his novels that once he remarked of one of his heroes: "Etzel has been living here in this room with me now for many years. I know every move that he makes, just how he looks, just when he is sad or glad . . . He is my favorite, my boy."

Christian Wahnschaffe, the hero in Wassermann's novel *The World's Illusion*, the son of a millionaire, teaches the gospel of complete self-surrender to the service of suffering mankind. His is an idealistic communism that does not in the least resemble the doctrines of Moscow; it can only be compared to the work of Jesus and to the burning faith of the earliest Christians. It is not astonishing that the sufferings of the Great War should have produced such a book, in which all former values, such as money and social rank, are completely transvalued and in which the hero, scion of a proud family, follows his mystical calling of true human love, kindness and service, to the extent that he nurses an outcast and dying prostitute, has murderers for companions, and disappears finally in the most miserable of slums where human sufferings were greatest and where his help was most needed. Wassermann's novel touches upon deep problems in the struggle of contemporary Germany thought; like Hauptmann's *Emmanuel Quint*, it shows that Christ, if he were to return to earth today, would not be recognized but would be scorned and ridiculed as a fool; like Hasenclever's *The Son*, it illustrates the bitter fight of succeeding generations going on today between father and son, where neither understands the other and where the relationship leads to contempt, hatred, or even tragedy; like Mann's *Buddenbrooks*, it describes the decline of a family, where energetic and ambitious ancestors are followed by dreamers and idealists; like Tolstoi's *Resurrection*, it asserts that complete self-surrender to suffering mankind is the only solution of this life's problems. Wassermann's novel, written at the end of the war, at a time when Spengler published his *Decline of the West*, is thus deeply significant of a defeated and despairing nation that takes stock of all that is left and tries to set out on a new road for a new life. Christian Wahnschaffe may be considered symbolical of the new German Republic; both try to help, to serve, to mitigate, to fulfil; both are sincere and pacifistic. We do not know what Christian's end on his mission will be; but we do know what the end of the Weimar Republic was: it failed in a world that was too much filled with greed and hatred to pay attention to its mission of peace.

*Subjects for Study*

1. Sketch of the life of Jakob Wassermann.
2. *The World's Illusion*.

Compare the story of Buddha with that of Wassermann's showing how ancient the plot is.

Compare *The World's Illusion* with Tolstoi's *Resurrection*.

In what respect does Wassermann's novel show a "defeatist" philosophy?

*Special References:*

*The World's Illusion*, by Jakob Wassermann.

*Resurrection*, by Leo N. Tolstoi.

*Additional References:*

Wassermann, Jakob. *The Maurizius Case; The Goose Man; Caspar Hauser.*

Feuchtwanger, Lion. *Success; Power.*

Schnitzler, Arthur. *Viennese Novelettes.*

Zweig, Stefan. *Conflicts.*

Spengler, Oswald. *The Decline of the West.*

Werfel, Franz. *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh.*

Eloesser, Arthur. *Modern German Literature.*

Hewett-Thayer, H. W. *The Modern German Novel.*

Herford, C. H. *Post War Mind of Germany.*

Bostoch, J. K. *Some Well-Known German War Novels.*

## CHAPTER XVI

HANS FALLADA, 1893- : *Little Man, What Now?*

Zweig's Grischa was murdered by the merciless machinery of war; Fallada's heroic young couple, struggling for a bit of human happiness, are annihilated by The Machine. The misery and the hopelessness of post-war and crisis-stricken Germany are due not only to a lost war; the machine-age is equally responsible for the crisis and the crash that has brought Western civilization to the brink of ruin. Germany, the most industrialized nation in Europe, with her entire middle-class wiped out by the inflation, with a war behind her which she had financed out of her own sacrifices while other much richer nations had borrowed billions abroad, with debts and reparations ahead of her which it would have taken more than sixty years to pay back—this Germany, with six millions of unemployed, felt the crisis more than any other nation in the world. Fallada's book shows us the devastating effects of such a situation: the materialistic greed of some, the political hatreds of others—and in the midst of this turmoil Pinneberg and Bunny, a young and courageous couple trying so gallantly to live a decent life, to procure a modest home for the baby that was soon to be born, to work hard and to find and keep the sundry little jobs that may occasionally come in after desperately long periods of waiting and hoping. Factories, slums, and bread-lines are the molochs that kill man's soul; and even more than the debauchery of Berlin's gamblers and adventurers do we see the brewing revolution, the social strife, the clashes between the five tremendous political armies that brought Germany to the brink of civil war. For Fallada and for Pinneberg and Bunny there is no panacea, there seems to be no way out of all this; they and with them the masses sink deeper and deeper and the book ends in a note of utter hopelessness. Just because the novel is written in such a realistic, simple and unassuming fashion, does the fate of our heroes touch us so very deeply—more so than if they had shouted their protests to the four winds.

Hans Fallada—whose real name is Rudolf Ditzen—was himself a little man, unemployed and joyless, before success reached him. He was an idling dreamer during his youth, preferring Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver or Don Quixote to the class-room drill. Though he loved the soil and the life of a hardworking farmer, he tried hard to make a living in towns, as a petty clerk and solicitor, going through “crippled years, sick years, years of beggary and patient waiting, and also, though I did not know it, years of apprenticeship.” Today he is comfortably off and was at last able to buy a farm where he is free to live a happy and quiet life, getting up every morning at five o'clock in all weathers to work outdoors and writing his books only in the restful hours of the evening.

The futility of man's struggles and the grimness of life are also

described in a second book of Fallada's, *The World Outside*, which shows—as does Alfred Doeblin's *Alexanderplatz, Berlin*—the desperate efforts of a former prisoner to make good in a world that did nothing to help him, everything to undo him. Here and there, Fallada, with the same compassionate power, shows "little" people as individuals, moved like pawns by the forces about them. We do not know what happened to Pinneberg and Bunny after they had lost everything, even their self-respect, but we begin to understand why to such countless millions of Germans Hitler must have appeared as a real Messiah who would bring back happiness and bread and peace—not war. Any vigorous policy seemed preferable to the slow death they had been passing through all these years of utter misery.

*Subjects for Study*

1. A Sketch of the Life of Hans Fallada.
2. *Little Man, What Now?*

Does unemployment, as you know it in the U. S. cause similar reactions to those described by Fallada?

Why may the attitude of Pinneberg's mother be called typical of post-war demoralization?

What are the evils of city life as pictured by Fallada?

*Special References:*

Fallada, Hans. *Little Man, What Now?*  
Kunitz, S. J. *Living Authors.*

*Additional References:*

Fallada, Hans. *The World Outside.*  
Doeblin, Alfred. *Alexanderplatz, Berlin.*

## CHAPTER XVII

### HERMANN LOENS, 1866-1914: *The Harm Wolf*

National Socialist literature, as accepted by the Nazis, goes back several centuries, and does not date only from 1933. It shows itself wherever German mentality fought against foreign influences and dogmas that threatened to destroy what seemed typically German: when the old Germanic tribes fought against the military and cultural power of the Romans; when the Hohenstaufen emperors in political, and Luther in religious matters, opposed the imperialistic and dictatorial designs of the Roman popes; when Kleist and Fichte incited the German people to resistance against the French invasions, holding up before their eyes the great cultural values of Germany's own achievements, when Nietzsche, in his praise of strong and proud superman, attacked the dogmas of socialism and collectivism as destructive of man's free personality.

The crisis in the struggle between things German and non-German came in the post-war period, when the Republic, full of good will towards everybody, internationalized its ideals, when the Socialists believed in a great international organization of workers all over the world, when the Jews, also international in their inspiration, their cultural and financial interests, seemed to assume leadership in literature, the press, the theatre, the film, and the universities. There followed naturally enough a violent and most emphatically German reaction, swinging from one extreme to the other, whose aim was to do away with cynical and critical internationalists, and at the same time to exalt the national past, old traditions, popular legends, Germanic characteristics and institutions. National Socialism goes back in history, not forward to a world revolution as communism does; and in the reawakening of old tribal instincts that oppose themselves to Latin civilization it sees the beginnings of a great Nordic Renaissance, in which it is emphasized that Europe consists not only of the heirs of Graeco-Roman culture, but also of those Germanic nations that are today united in the Third Reich. International institutions that take orders from non-German centers, the Catholic Church, the free-masons, the Marxist labor unions, the Zionists—all these are suspected, if not actually attacked; instead, the Nazis plan to go back to their own traditions and intend to protect those that are really the backbone of the state: the German burgher, the German peasant. The big cities produce only cynical intellectuals; hence the pride with which the toiling German peasant is opposed to those uprooted "asphalt radicals." Mystical terms denoting the deep union of all the German people, like "race" and "the German soil," became slogans in the fight against all that is international. A vision of the union of an immortal German race of eighty million souls within and without the present national boundaries can whip the masses into a frenzy of pride and

joy easily comprehensible in the light of previous sufferings and humiliations.

National Socialist literature centers chiefly around three types of interest: 1. Worship of national heroes, as in Johst's *Leo Schlageter*, a German patriot executed by the French during the Ruhr invasion in 1923, or of courageous free-thinkers and rebels, as in Kolbenheyer's *Heroic Passions*, the story of Giordano Bruno's fight against the Catholic inquisition; 2. Somewhat Romantic mysticism unfettered by any specific dogma, as in Kolbenheyer's *Paracelsus*; 3. Glorification of German burghers and peasantry who are considered the strength of the nation, as in Grimm's *Nation Without Space*, a novel dealing with German Southwest African settlers, describing the men who remain loyal to their fatherland even now, under foreign domination, and pleading for a return of these former colonies to Germany.

Together with this third type, the "Heimatliteratur," we can also mention Loens' *The Harm Wolf*. Hermann Loens was born in Kulm, West Prussia, became an editor, published poems, ballads, and novels, and was killed in action in 1914—yet he is considered as an outstanding forerunner of the "Third Reich." *The Harm Wolf* takes us back into a period even more oppressive to the German people than the Great War: the Thirty Years' War, beginning as a fight between the Protestants and Catholics of Germany in 1618, but ending as a war of relentless imperialism in which foreign invaders plundered and burned the exhausted country and in which France from the Southwest and Sweden from the Northeast robbed the Empire of many rich provinces—Alsace, Pomerania, etc. For thirty years burial and ransacking hordes of Italian, Spanish, French, Danish, and Swedish soldiers overran the country, stole property, burned cities, terrorized women; and in these thirty years the population of Germany, by war, plague, or starvation, sank from eighteen to eight millions! Only here and there did desperate peasants organize to offer resistance, while they lived in hideouts, mercilessly torturing and hanging all foreign soldiers they could get hold of. Loens, in this gruesome picture of cruel warfare, extols, above all, one thing: the will of the German peasantry to live, to work, to be free—for nothing can keep these men and women down, nothing can discourage them, nothing can destroy their faith in their fatherland and in peace. Post-war Germany is urged by the Nazis to take a leaf from this book and to be grateful to its heroic author; for the period from 1919 to 1933, too, proved clearly that no nation would be helped, in spite of its sufferings and protestations, unless it was willing to help itself—and that no nation can live that has surrendered its own strength and dignity.

*Subjects for Study*

1. The Story of Hermann Loens' *The Harm Wolf*.
2. Discuss the Novel:  
Give a brief discussion of the causes and results of the Thirty Years' War.  
What is the attitude toward the peasant in Loens' novel?  
Why do the Nazis prefer this book to works by Wassermann or Zweig?

*Special Reference:*

Loens, Hermann. *The Harm Wolf*.

## CHAPTER XVIII

E. ALEXANDER POWELL, 1879- : *The Long Roll on the Rhine*

Any discussion of Germany at the present time ought to include information on the new political organization that came into power in 1933, but the violent partisanship that rages around the subject of the Hitler régime makes it very difficult to present something objective. However, among the many authors who have written on the subject there is one who seems to present what might be called an American, non-partisan view of the situation; namely, the widely-experienced author, traveler, and war-correspondent, E. Alexander Powell.

Mr. Powell was born in Syracuse, N. Y., and was educated at Syracuse University and Oberlin College. As early as 1905 he was a correspondent in the Near East. For a while he was in the consular service, but soon returned to serve as special correspondent in the Caucasus, South Africa, and Mexico. When the Great War broke out he represented the *London Daily Mail* and *Scribner's Magazine* on various fronts, with both the German and the Allied Armies. When America joined in the War he served as captain of cavalry, was invalided home, and in 1919 commissioned lieutenant colonel in the Officers' Reserve Corps. He is the author of more than twenty-five books embodying his experiences in numerous parts of the world—all in all, a dashing, enviable career.

To present his point of view it would seem best to quote a few statements from his introduction. He writes:

Let me make my own attitude unmistakably clear at the very outset by declaring that many of the policies pursued by the Nazis have been incredibly stupid and short-sighted, many of their methods abominably cruel. I have nothing but condemnation for their treatment of the Jews, whose lot is indeed a tragic one. For the numerous authenticated excesses of which Hitler's followers have been guilty no right-thinking man could find a shadow of excuse. But that is no reason why the German people should be condemned *en masse*, why their very real grievances should not be given sympathetic consideration, or why the extraordinary nature of Hitler's achievement should not be recognized. If the professional Germanophobes can twist that into an admission of pro-Hitlerism or anti-Semitism they are welcome to make the most of it.

Mr. Powell approaches the happenings in Germany not as something that has arisen out of the actions of one man or one political party merely, but seeing them coupled with the economic and political situation as it developed during the War and Post-War years. To quote again:

I myself believe that from the struggle now in progress will emerge a new Germany, animated by a spirit far different from that of the past fifteen years. But, provided Germany is given the Square Deal to which every nation is entitled, provided her former enemies consent to redress her grievances and assent to her legitimate aspirations, I do not believe that this new spirit will necessarily prove a bellicose one. For—and let there be no mistake about this—there is no desire for war on the part of the great mass of the German people.

However much we may decry certain of their methods, however deep our sense of insecurity and alarm, it must be admitted that the Nazis have worked a political miracle. They have yanked a beaten, discouraged and hopeless people out of the slough of despond; they have instilled the elixirs of hope, courage and ambition into the drooping spirit of the Fatherland. Fanatics, hot-heads, ruffians, military madmen, victims of demagoguery, fools who rock the boat, call them what you will, they nevertheless have the support of the German people, for you can not laugh off the forty million votes of confidence cast in the election of November, 1933. The inescapable fact remains that the Nazis must be reckoned with whether the rest of the world likes it or not, that the future of Europe largely rests in the hands of the ridiculed and reviled Adolf Hitler.

I maintain that we are not going to improve conditions in Germany for the Jews or any one else by our constant theming on German insincerity and crookedness, our morose interpretations of every move of the Nazi Government as fraught with the dishonorable and the sinister. That it is hypocritical for us to excoriate the Reich for tendering its resignation to the League of Nations, which we have persistently refused to join. That it is insincere to ridicule the menace of Communism in Germany while we are secretly apprehensive of Communist designs in this country. That it is manifestly unfair to single out the Nazis for condemnation for muzzling the Press, bringing the trades unions under the control of the State, and suppressing all political opposition, while at the same offering the hand of friendship to Fascist Italy and Communist Russia, which for years have been doing precisely the same thing.

It is with no over-confidence in his own judgment that Mr. Powell writes—his long experience guards him against that. He states his aim with frankness and modesty, but with the full knowledge that anyone writing on this thorny subject will be attacked as a prejudiced writer, as is amply borne out in the reviews written on Powell's book in the *New York Times* and other publications.

*Subjects for Study*

1. Short sketch of E. Alexander Powell.  
Is it possible for an observer of a violently contested political situation to be neutral?
2. *The Long Roll on the Rhine.*  
What were some of the actions of the Allies that drove the Germans to seek a "strong" government?  
Contrast Hindenburg and Hitler.

*Special Reference:*

*The Long Roll on the Rhine*, by E. A. Powell.

## CHAPTER XIX

JETHRO BITHELL: *Germany: a Companion to German Studies*

As an introduction to German history and culture, the volume edited by Mr. Bithell can be highly recommended. Written by a number of English scholars and specialists, this book plans to give a complete survey of Germany's cultural past and present with special emphasis on the developments and trends of the last fifty years. An excellent bibliography at the end of each chapter supplies the reader with more material and allows him to dig deeper into those problems in which his interest has been awakened.

Even a short synopsis of this volume would become the equivalent of a synopsis of German cultural activity, and therefore can not be attempted in this short space. Chapter I, entitled "The Country, its Peoples, Language, Thought" familiarizes us with the geography, the tribal characteristics and the dialects of Germany, and attempts to give a very brief outline of German philosophy, from Leibniz, Kant, and Fichte to Schopenhauer, Marx, and Nietzsche. Of the three following chapters devoted to history (II, Up to 1648; III, From 1648 to 1900; IV, From 1900 to 1931), the last one is perhaps the most unsatisfactory, because it sticks too much to a chronological enumeration of facts without trying to interpret them. The other two chapters, however, are real masterpieces of conciseness in developing the important lines of German history. No European can discuss present-day politics without going back into his nation's history for at least five hundred years—and the American reader will realize why the knowledge of historical facts is an absolute prerequisite to an understanding of Central European affairs. Charlemagne, Emperor Barbarossa, the Teutonic Knight, the Hansa Cities, the Spanish-Hapsburg Empire, the Reformation, the Thirty Years' War, the misery of the dying Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, which for centuries was invaded from all sides until the Prussians, through stern patriotism, succeeded in keeping back the tide of foreign invaders—all this makes for extremely interesting reading. Gradually a new and a stronger empire arises under Prussian leadership, from Frederick the Great through Bismarck up to Kaiser Wilhelm II. Here German history becomes identical with Prussian history. Then, in 1918, comes the downfall also of this "Second Reich" and, in 1933, the reappearance of a "Third Reich."

Four excellent chapters are devoted to German literature. Not only do we get a clear picture of the two highest peaks in German literature—the first around 1200 under the Hohenstaufen emperors, with Wolfram von Eschenbach and Walter von der Vogelweide, the second beginning in the age of Frederick the Great with Lessing, Wieland, Goethe, Schiller, Kleist, etc.—but contemporary German literature also is fully discussed and analyzed; we find for instance

such names as Hauptmann, Mann, George, Rilke, Wedekind, Zweig, Wassermann, Schnitzler, Kaiser.

The last three chapters, finally, deal with other German cultural achievements: German Painting, German Architecture and Sculpture, German Music. In German painting, we study particularly the sixteenth century, with such outstanding contemporaries of Luther as Grünewald, Dürer, Cranach, Holbein—while the quest of the really great beauties of German architecture takes us even farther back into history, into the time of the medieval Gothic cathedrals of Cologne, Strassburg, and Ulm. In the seventeenth century of gorgeous baroque art—Vienna, Prague, Salzburg, Fulda—we find also the beginnings of the great era of German music; and with Bach and Händel starts a procession of world-famous composers such as no other country can match: Mozart, Gluck, Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Weber, Schumann, Liszt, Wagner, Brahms, Bruckner, Strauss, Hindemith.

Thus this book, edited by Mr. Bithell, Reader in German in the University of London, gives us a clear summary of the German cultural development and allows us to view the literary periods which we have briefly discussed in these pages and the books which have been read in their proper perspective.

*Subjects for Study*

1. Discussion of German Music, with Illustrations.
2. Discussion of German Painting, with Illustrations.
3. Discussion of German Architecture and Sculpture, with Illustrations.

*Special Reference:*

*Germany; A Comparison to German Studies*, edited by Jethro Bithell.

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2. The Character of the Patriarch in *Nathan the Wise* Contrasted with *Nathan*.
3. The History of the Ghetto in European Countries.

*Second Meeting: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: Hermann and Dorothea*

1. The Man Goethe.
2. *Hermann and Dorothea*.

*Third Meeting: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: Faust*

1. The End of Marlowe's Dr. Faustus Compared with That of Goethe's Faust.
2. The Character Faust.
3. The Character Mephistopheles.

*Fourth Meeting: Friedrich Schiller: William Tell*

1. Friedrich Schiller.
2. *William Tell*.

*Fifth Meeting: Johann Ludwig Tieck: Puss in Boots*

1. *Puss in Boots*.
2. *Puss in Boots* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

*Sixth Meeting: Heinrich von Kleist: The Prince of Homburg*

1. A Short Sketch of the Life of Heinrich von Kleist.
2. *Michael Kohlhaas*.
3. *The Prince of Homburg*.

*Seventh Meeting: Fiction and Fantasy in German Romance*

1. A Comparison of the *Story of the Just Casper and Fair Annie*.
2. A Comparison of *Doppelgänger* with Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.
3. A Reading from Appendix C, page 392.

*Eighth Meeting: Richard Wagner: Lohengrin*

1. A Short Sketch of the Life of Wagner.
2. The Aims of the Revolution of 1848.
3. *Lohengrin*.

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1. Keller's Life and Times.
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1. A Short Sketch of the Life of Friedrich Nietzsche.
2. *Thus Spake Zarathustra*.

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1. Life of Gerhart Hauptmann.
2. *The Weavers*.

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1. Thomas Mann.
2. *Buddenbrooks*.

*Thirteenth Meeting: Carl Zuckmayer: The Captain of Köpenick*

1. Story of Wilhelm Voigt.
2. *The Captain of Köpenick*.

*Fourteenth Meeting: Arnold Zweig: The Case of Sergeant Grischa*

1. The Character of Arnold Zweig as Revealed in Berlin.
2. *Sergeant Grischa*.

*Fifteenth Meeting: Jakob Wassermann: The World's Illusion*

1. Sketch of the Life of Jakob Wassermann.
2. *The World's Illusion*.

*Sixteenth Meeting: Hans Fallada: Little Man, What Now?*

1. Sketch of the Life of Hans Fallada.
2. *Little Man, What Now?*

*Seventeenth Meeting: Hermann Loens: The Harm Wolf*

1. Story of Hermann Loens' *The Harm Wolf*.
2. Discuss the Novel.

*Eighteenth Meeting: E. Alexander Powell: The Long Roll on the Rhine*

1. Short Sketch of E. Alexander Powell.
2. *The Long Roll on the Rhine*.

*Nineteenth Meeting: Jethro Bithell: Germany*

1. Discussion of German Music.
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